

Thousands destined for Canada trapped in Afghanistan; group requests federal aid

AS OF AUG 31, 2021:

Thousands of people destined for Canada remain in hiding from the Taliban in Kabul, waiting and hoping for a way out of Afghanistan.

"We left homes, you know, we left our province, our cities, and we're just now stuck in Kabul, and the only hope that we have is that the Government of Canada will eventually do something for us," an interpreter who worked for the Canadian Armed Forces told CTV National News.

Foreign Affairs Minister Marc Garneau confirmed Tuesday that about 1,250 Canadian citizens, permanent residents and their family members were left behind in Afghanistan.

"Stay put, because the situation at this point is uncertain," he said. "We're trying very hard to get the Taliban to agree to allow people to leave safely."

The safest route of escape, however, may still be through the Kabul airport, which the Taliban now control. A coalition of nations, led by the U.S., is negotiating safe passage for their citizens and vulnerable Afghans who worked for them.

But it could be months before the airport is functional and safe enough to evacuate everyone.

"There's a lot of work being done, a lot of hand-holding going on and a lot of reassuring, but there's not much we can do until this negotiation and the operational plan comes together," retired major-general Denis Thompson told CTV National News.

Thompson, a former commander in Kandahar, is part of the [Veterans Transition Network](#), a Canadian veteran-led charity with boots on the ground in Afghanistan. It's been focused on finding safe houses, food and security for the thousands of Afghans who have special Canadian visas but no way out of the country.

They've been operating without financial help from the government, although late Tuesday night Global Affairs said it would review their application for funding.

"I understand that we're in the middle of an election, but frankly what it means to us is we need to bridge the gap between now and end of the election," Thompson said.